

REAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE

Essence = Reason why a thing is what it is

Existence = Fundamental actuality of any being insofar as it is a being

Meaning of minor real distinction between metaphysical principles:

- 1. One is not the other**
- 2. The one is inseparable from the other in the composite**

A being whose essence is "to be" must have every quality of existence. Hence, multiple beings of world are distinguished by real differences in existential qualities -- so that only One could be Pure Existence.

On Being and Essence: chapter 4

.....for no essence is intelligible without its parts. Every essence or quiddity can be understood without anything being known of its existence. For I can know what a man or a phoenix is and yet remain ignorant as to whether it exists in reality. Thus it is clear that existence is other than essence or quiddity, unless, perhaps, there is a being whose quiddity is its very existence. But there can be only one such being, the First Being. For nothing can be multiplied except either through the addition of some difference.....

But should there exist some being which is simply the act of existing, so that existence be itself subsistent, then a difference cannot be added to this act of existence. Otherwise, it would not be purely and simply the act of existence, but existence plus a certain form. Thus we conclude that there can be only one such being which is its very act of existence. With this exception, then, in every other thing its existence is other than its quiddity, nature, or form.

Now, whatever belongs to a thing is either caused by the principles of its nature, as is risibility in man, or comes to it from some extrinsic principle, as light in the air from the influence of the sun. But it cannot be that the existence of a thing is caused by the form or quiddity of that thing - - I say caused as by an efficient cause -- because then something would be its own cause and would bring itself into existence, which is impossible.

PURE EXISTENCE AND THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Point I. Demonstration of God's Existence through Real Distinction between Essence and Existence in Finite Beings.

- 1. Essence is really distinct from existence in all finite beings.**
- 2. Existence (esse) either comes from a thing's essence or from some extrinsic cause.**
- 3. Since nothing can give what it does not have, finite essences cannot account for their own existence -- since their existence is "other than" their essence.**
- 4. Finite beings are caused beings. (Recall, a cause must be simultaneous with its effect.)**
- 5. No infinite regress among simultaneous proper (per se) causes is possible. (True causes act here and now on effects.)**

The problem if infinite regress among per se causes:

A. Pro: As long as each cause is caused by a prior cause and one never runs out of prior causes, infinite regress appears possible.

B. Con: Intermediate causes are by nature deficient, i.e., they never actually explain the causality transmitted through them. Hence, an infinite regress would never explain the final effect.

6. A First Cause in which essence is identical to existence must exist. (The "I AM WHO AM." of Exodus 3:14.) This Cause (Pure Existence) is responsible for the existence of all finite beings, which are themselves composed of really distinct essence and extrinsically caused act of existence. This First Cause all men call God.

Point II. Natural Theology: Study of the First Cause of the subject matter of metaphysics: God -- existence and nature.

1. Validity of term, "God," in philosophy -- universally employed, even by atheists.

2. Glossary of Terms:

Theism: Belief in some traditional notion of God

Agnosticism: Denies existence of God can be known. (General agnostic vs. theistic agnostic.)

Atheism: Denies existence of God. Theoretical vs. practical atheism.

Deism: God creates world, then "interferes" no more.

Anti-Theism: Agressively attacks belief in God in order to allow what it conceives as "social progress."

Pantheism: Everything is God.

Naturalism: The natural world is all that exists and is self-explanatory.

Fideism: Objects of religious faith (e.g., God) cannot be proven by human reason.

Preambles to Faith (praeambula fidei): Rationally demonstrable philosophical truths presupposed by religious faith, e.g., God's existence and veracity, epistemological realism.

3. Nature and problem of proving God's existence: Vatican Council I (Denzinger 1806) The true God can be known with certitude from the things that He has made: Five Ways lead to nominally defined God -- essential definition comes later.

Gabriel Marcel on "proof."

Anselm's Ontological Argument. If God is, He is... necessarily. Demonstration propter quid and quia.

4. Structure of proof following Romans 1:20: "...being understood by the things that are made."

Point III. Our Knowledge of God's Nature (Not His Existence). The "Threefold Way."

1. Causality: *Nihil dat quod non habet*. Nothing gives what it does not have. If we find a positive quality in creation, God must possess it.

2. Negation; Remotion: We remove negative qualities seemingly discovered in causality.

3. Analogy; Participation (*pars-cipere* = to receive as it were a part): What positive qualities or attributes creatures share in or receive, God simply *is*. E.g., we *have* existence, but God *is* existence. We *have* goodness or beauty or power, but God *is* goodness or beauty or power. Not mere analogy of

extrinsic attribution, e.g., God is said to be living *only* because He causes living things. Analogy of *intrinsic* attribution is required, based on a real likeness found in God because some quality found in creatures exists pre-eminently in God as Cause. But God is an equivocal cause, as is a watchmaker to watch or painter to painting.

Point III: The Divine Attributes or Names: God's qualities: Meanings and Proofs.

Names of God do not express divine essence directly, but are derived from creatures via the "threefold way." They do represent something IN God, since the effects of God pre-exist in God as cause of them. Thus, God is not good because he causes goodness, but rather he causes goodness because He is Goodness Itself.

1. Not a body: Meaning: God is a purely spiritual being. Proof: The First Cause cannot be composed of matter and form, since that would imply a prior cause. Matter is pure potency, but God is Pure Act. Negative judgment of separation: God is a being Who is NOT material.

2. Simplicity. A "key concept.": Meaning: God is not composed of parts, principles, or substances. Proof: The First Cause cannot be composed. In God alone, essence is identical with existence. Implications: Every quality of God is identical with the divine substance or essence. In man, substance, intellect, will, knowledge, and love are distinct. In God, they are all identical. Thus, the Divine Attributes or Names are distinct only in relation to our knowledge, not in themselves.

3. Goodness: Meaning: God is pure goodness. Proof: Goodness in creatures implies this through causality and simplicity. Evil is merely a privation of a good that ought to be found in something, e.g., blindness in a horse is not a thing in itself, the lack of the due perfection of sight. Every existential perfection of creatures is pre-eminently contained in God.

4. Infinity: Meaning: God is unlimited in being and all existential perfections. Proof: God is Pure Existence. Spiritual magnitude: meaning infinity of power and completeness of being. In solely one Being can essence be identical with existence.

5. Unicity: Meaning: There is only *one* God. Proof: Multiple Infinite Beings would limit each other.

6. Omniscience: Meaning: God knows all things. Proof: We have knowledge. Causality implies God has knowledge. Simplicity implies God *is* knowledge. Infinity implies God is infinite knowledge. God knows creatures perfectly by knowing Himself perfectly in the act of creating all

things. We know things only from sensation and observing the effects of their natures. We depend on their presence to us to know them. But God does not *depend* on anything. Hence, in knowing Himself as the cause of all creatures, He knows them "from the inside out" as it were, since He knows that to which His causality extends -- even to the least aspect. God knows created multiplicity in a single, simple act.

7. Omnipotence: Meaning: God can do or make anything. Proof: Power to create implies no limit on power. Objections based on self-contradictions which are not "things" are not valid.

8. Immutability: Meaning: God cannot change. Proof: Pure Act has no potency to further act. Does NOT mean "inactivity." Distinguish motion from action. God is motionless Pure Act.

9. Eternity: Meaning: Simultaneous and perfect possession of interminable life. It is not "endless duration or unending time." Rather, it is the proper meaning of the divine life. A second "key concept." Proof: Flows from immutability. God is outside of time. Time is part of creation. All parts of time are equally present to God. Unlike God, creatures experience a succession of moments through time. Many errors arise through surreptitiously, usually unintentionally, "inserting" God into time. In God, there is no past, present, or future. He is the eternal Now.

10. Omnipresence: Meaning: God is present in all things, *but* as a cause is present to its effects. Proof: God creates all things.

11. Personal: Meaning: God is a person. Proof: Person is a supposit of a rational nature. As an intellectual being, God is, by definition, a personal being.

12. Intellect, Will, Love, etc. Qualities found in creatures -- required in God by causality. God wills own good necessarily, creatures freely. God's will is eternal and irrevocable. God's will IS fulfilled. Divine justice is met because either the good are rewarded, or else, the evil are punished -- through natural and supernatural sanctions. Distinguish antecedent and consequent will in God. Antecedent: All be saved. Consequent: Sinners damned. Consequent alone actually exists.

God *is* infinite love of His own goodness -- and loves all else through this self-love. God alone rightly loves Himself above all else. He did not create us because He loves us, but to freely manifest His glory. Nonetheless, He loves us infinitely.

There are many other divine attributes.

Point IV: Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom.

1. If God has infallible and perfect knowledge of all future events, how can man freely choose his future acts? Involves concepts of foreknowledge, predestination, predetermination, and freedom.

2. God's foreknowledge is not "before" knowledge, since He is entirely outside of time and knows all things in His *present*.

3. Predestination:

Calvin: God knows our future and we are helpless to change it: We are predetermined - denial of true freedom.

Aquinas: God knows from all eternity what is to become of us, but he does not predetermine us thereby.

4. God determines, in creating it, the nature of each thing and act, but He determines the free being to be and to act as free. The creature's free act is in time: God is not in time. Creature's free act before done is undetermined; after done it is a determined reality and cannot be undone. God knows it before as undetermined and after as determined, but both from outside of time.

GOOD AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Point I. The Transdendentals:

1. Being and its merely logically distinct names which transcend all categories of being.

2. Being -- Considered in itself and positively is called "being."

-- Considered in itself and negatively is called "one."

-- Considered relative to intellect is called "true."

-- Considered relative to will is called "good."

3. The good: being as desirable.

Being is good insofar as it is desirable. "The good is that which all things desire." Aristotle.

A being is desirable insofar as it is perfect.

A being is perfect insofar as it is in act.

A being is in act insofar as it is being.

A being is good insofar as it is being.

- (See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 5., art. 1, c.)

4. Implications:

Nothing is evil by nature or substance.

Evil is a predicamental accident: the lack of a due perfection.

Evil can be understood solely in relation to a perfection, which belongs to a thing's nature, but is absent.

Hence, blindness is a physical evil for a horse, but not for a stone.

Point II. The Problem of Evil

Classic Expression: Voltaire's *Candide*. "This is the best of all possible worlds, and whatever happens happens for the best."

Statement: If God is all good and all powerful, why does physical and moral evil exist in the world? If He is all good, then He must be powerless to prevent it. If he is all powerful, then he must be evil to allow it when He could prevent it.

Aquinas' solution: God is so good and so powerful that He allows evil to exist and out of it produces good. S.T. I, 2, 3, ad. 1.

Given: Evil in the world is real, not imaginary -- but it is a privation of proper perfection, a perversion of nature. But, by definition, God creates all things in accord with his own intention -- thereby giving them their natures. Whence evil? Atheism presupposes that God creates the world with the evil we now find in it. Clearly, God did not. He must, then, have created it good, and then, evil was subsequently introduced -- not by necessity, but by abuse of a free faculty or will.

Hence, God creates free beings. He allows their misuse of the perfection of freedom to introduce evil into the world. God must permit abuse of freedom so that greater good comes about than would otherwise have been possible, e.g., the absolutely free and uncoerced love of God, the Highest Good. God cannot create persons without real freedom. (A rational non-free being would be self-contradictory.) If freedom is real, it can be abused. If it can be abused, it is not absurd that it has been abused. Effects of the misuse of the high spiritual faculty of freedom by high creatures (rational, spiritual) could have wide ramifications throughout the created world.

We must not pre-judge the goodness of the outcome of the divine plan of creation since we are clearly midway in its fruition.

/Is this the best of all possible worlds? Could not God have created a world in which all creatures would choose the true good, and thus attain their last ends? The creation "library." There shall never be another you (for better or for worse). God's free choice in creating is inscrutable.

Actual condition of this world are ideally suited for the maximization of the value of human freedom. We are free even to be atheists (through a deliberate refusal to follow the route of reason back to a First Cause) and thereby to refuse the moral guidance of God's natural and revealed laws which are designed for our true good and ultimate finality in Him. (See my *Origin of the Human Species*, second edition, Epilogue, pp. 211-213.)

CORRELATIONS OF PHILOSOPHICAL DOCTRINES

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT PHILOSOPHICAL DOCTRINES DO NOT "STAND ALONE," BUT RATHER ENTAIL NECESSARILY CORRELATIVE DOCTRINES IN OTHER AREAS.

**PHILOSOPHICAL SCIENCE
PHILOSOPHICAL DOCTRINE**

**METAPHYSICS
DUALISM**

MATERIALISM

**EPISTEMOLOGY
REALISM**

IDEALISM

**ETHICS
NATURAL LAW**

SITUATIONISM

ANTI-REALIST EPISTEMOLOGICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE:

NOMINALISM: TO AFFIRM THAT DIRECT EXPERIENCE GIVES ONLY PARTICULARS, WITH NOTHING AT ALL UNIVERSAL. REPRESENTATIVES: WILLIAM OF OCKHAM, BISHOP BERKELEY, LOGICAL POSITIVISM. DARWINIST EVOLUTION HAS NO TRUE SPECIES, ONLY POPULATIONS IF SIMILAR INDIVIDUALS.

OPPOSING DOCTRINE: MODERATE REALISM -- UNIVERSALS FORMED BY THE INTELLECT BASED ON EXTRAMENTAL FOUNDATIONS.

SENSISM/EMPIRICISM: TO ACCEPT AS IMMEDIATE AND SOLE CONTENT OF PERCEPTION DISCRETE, PARTICULAR, SENSUOUS IMPRESSIONS -- SENSATIONS OR BARE SENSE QUALITIES -- LEAVING ONE ENTRAPPED IN PURE PHENOMENA WITH NO KNOWLEDGE OF CAUSAL FOUNDATIONS OR SUBSTANCES OR ESSENTIAL NATURES.

REPRESENTATIVES: ROGER BACON, JOHN LOCKE, BERKELEY, DAVID HUME, J.S. MILL.

OPPOSING DOCTRINE: RECOGNITION OF INTELLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE AS WELL AS SENSE KNOWLEDGE.

IDEALISM: TO REGARD THE SUBJECTIVE IDEA OR IMAGE AS THE IMMEDIATE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE, WITH NO KNOWLEDGE OF EXTRAMENTAL BEING WHATEVER. REPRESENTATIVES: BERKELEY, KANT, FICHTE, HEGEL.

OPPOSING DOCTRINE: EPISTEMOLOGICAL REALISM -- THE INITIAL GIVEN OF EXPERIENCE (*SCIO ALIQUID ESSE.*) ENTAILS NOT MERELY

DESCARTES' SUBJECTIVE REFLECTION (*COGITO, ERGO SUM.*), BUT EQUALLY, IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE OF UNDOUBTABLE EXTRAMENTAL THINGS.

CAUSAL THEORY OF PERCEPTION AS BASIS FOR IDEALISM. PRESUPPOSES MATERIALISTIC THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE. THEORY ANALYSED BY NICHOLAS O. LOSSKY. MATERIALISTIC ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE BEGINS WITH EXTERNAL OBJECTS AS CAUSES WHICH LEAD TO INTERNAL EXPERIENCE AS EFFECTS, LEADING TO IDEALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY.